



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about why BigLaw might not be for everyone. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. Together, we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about why BigLaw might not be for everyone. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, to start off, let's clarify what we're even talking about when we say "BigLaw". What is this?

Sadie Jones: Basically, it's just the biggest top law firms, usually in the bigger, more major markets, which would be cities, and the ones that make the most money and employ the largest number of people. I think there're some firms that might be considered BigLaw to some people and not to others. Generally, they're in lockstep with pay, so they all pay the same. But there are some BigLaw firms that are on a second tier for what they pay, but it's close. But generally, it's just the top firms.

Alison Monahan: Right. So, if you opened up the Am Law 100 or Am Law 200, all the firms that are listed there, plus possibly some smaller ones that are very, very boutique-y. But I would say usually it's the big offices in New York and Chicago and LA and Houston or wherever they are, in Texas. I don't know, you would know that better. Well, interestingly enough, if you look at statistics, you see that the vast majority of associates have actually left the firm they started at within five years, and I'm not really sure law students grasp this. Do you think so?

Sadie Jones: I think this is the fundamental point that law students miss when they're getting into BigLaw, especially law students that maybe don't have lawyers in their family, or don't have experience with this business model, and especially because it's different than other companies. I don't think other companies or industries are necessarily based off like they expect you to leave every single year, people fall off. BigLaw is a pyramid. Every BigLaw firm is like that, and so there always has to be fewer people as you go along. Now, they don't want to



lose a lot of people right at the beginning. So losing people in their first or second year probably doesn't fit the business model, but they're going to. Every single year, they're going to lose some people, partially because people will want to leave, partially because they'll be asked to leave or pushed out – usually that's not public. So it's hard to know whether the person was told to leave or chose to leave. And so, when you get to year five and six, which would be considered a mid-level, you expect a lot of people from that class have gone at that point because that's when you're heading into, "Okay, these are the people who are probably going to be close to up for partner and here for the long haul." Although you're going to continue to lose people until you get to year 9 and 10. Or now, I think it might be 11 and 12.

Alison Monahan: Oh my gosh, seriously? They've extended it that much?

Sadie Jones: It's pushed out. Yeah, when I started, it was more like nine years to partner, and so that's when you're left with the last few people that are going to be up for partner. And some of them aren't going to make it and leave then, or get another title. But basically, you can see how people just fall off in a pyramid as you go through those years.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's kind of crazy because I worked with summer classes that were over 100 people, and when you look at who made partner from those classes, it was maybe a handful, a couple of people, which is kind of crazy because these are all people who are top of their class, very motivated. I mean, what's going on here? Why do people leave so fast?

Sadie Jones: Well, one, they're going to get picked off by the firm. Their work is not going to be up to the level that the firm expects, or people might just not like you. For those reasons, people will leave in terms of being asked to leave, things are not working out. Also, some practice groups maybe aren't doing as well, so they just have to find the lower performers in their view. Maybe you don't have enough billable hours, but maybe there's not enough work, it could be out of your control. And then there're just going to be so many things about BigLaw that aren't going to work for most people. And they're going to realize over a period of time that this is not the lifestyle, the work, the work hours, the schedule, people don't like billing their time. There are a million reasons, but basically, I feel like when you get to the smaller group at the end, those are the people where it works for them. And so, when you're talking about a class of 100 or 150, and then you're down to 10, you realize that BigLaw does not work for most people.

Alison Monahan: That is a very good point, and I think something people really under-appreciate. I think there's so much emphasis in law school on getting that BigLaw job, getting the summer position, getting the offer, starting the job, and then it's kind of like, "Okay, great, you got it." But that doesn't mean that you're set up



for life. And I think it's worth thinking about this in advance, whether it even makes sense for you to go into this environment or not, because I think there are a lot of things people can do that don't involve showing up for a job they hate every day, which the reality is, a lot of people hate a lot of things about BigLaw. It's just kind of the nature of the business. And I think as you pointed out, the business model is for people to leave, and so there are incentives directing you that direction. And then there are these things people really hate, I think. I was thinking about it. For me, I worked in various law firms as a summer associate and then permanent associate. And I think it falls into three buckets of the things that people really end up hating. Some people really hate the work – and we're going to talk about each one of these. Some people just hate the work, and it is what it is. Other people really hate the people that they're working with. And a lot of people hate the work environment. So let's talk a little bit about work. What do people do in BigLaw firms, and why do they not like it?

- Sadie Jones: Well, I think this has changed over time, but equally, people don't like it. In the past, I think what people didn't like, especially starting out, was that they were doing all the grunt work. It's a notorious thing that you would be a first or second-year just doing doc review, and that was always what people didn't like. That actually happens less now because most of the business models have moved that stuff to outsourcing, almost like a call center model. So they're not paying for first and second-year associates to necessarily do that work. You are going to do some of that work, but I don't think it's quite as bad in terms of that. I think that generally though, if anything, now things are staffed leaner, so there's going to be a lot on you quickly and you're going to be thrown into it, and there's not necessarily a lot of time to figure it out. So I think it's a lot of pressure right from the beginning, and I think that can be hard. On the other hand, maybe there are things you wanted to get opportunities to do and you can't find it, because it's very hierarchical and you're where you are on the food chain at a law firm, and so you're just being given things, but you don't necessarily get to say, "Oh, but I really want to X."
- Alison Monahan: "I want to take a deposition", "I want to go to court." You're a first-year; you're not taking a deposition. There are other people above you who've been there for five or six years fighting to take that deposition.
- Sadie Jones: And I think that's something that law students miss, because BigLaw is known as you'll get the experience, which you may.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you might.
- Sadie Jones: And I think pro bono work is a way to get more experience, but you have to fit that into your billable hours requirement. So it's a juggling act. So yeah, I think that you have very little control and there are people who just aren't hitting



their benchmarks that they need to, because it's not available or you didn't get in with the right people. It's very political.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think more and more clients don't really want to pay for first and second-year associates to do a lot of things, and so I think in some ways that's taken away opportunities that maybe existed previously. Yeah, I think that doc review and stuff like that has dissipated a bit, both because of the outsourcing and also because of technology. But I think for me at least, a lot of it was just that people would just tell me to do things and dump stuff on me and expect me to figure it out, and I didn't really have a lot of control over what was doing. And oftentimes, to be fair, I was doing pretty interesting work. I actually didn't hate the work; I just didn't want to do as much of it as I was doing in the environment I was doing it in. But I think for some people, they really do just hate this work, and I think that's something to really think about. What do you want to be doing in your work life? If you want to be, for example, doing a lot of client interaction, BigLaw is probably not for you.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. The other thing about the work is, you may be working for clients that you do not like.

Alison Monahan: True.

Sadie Jones: That you do not believe in their values. You don't have a lot of control over that. I don't know if there may be some things that you can draw a line at or you can get around, but generally, everyone does some work in areas that they are not comfortable with. And that's just what you signed up for.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think that's actually a really important point too, is to think about who is paying the bills here, who has the money to pay the rates that BigLaw charges. So when people come to me and they say, "Oh yeah, I'm really into environmental law. I'm going to go work at a BigLaw firm", I just look at them like, "Do you understand which side you're going to be on in these cases?" Earth First is not paying a large law firm to do this, probably. Maybe some and pro bono, but probably not, because it's going to conflict with their other client work. You really have to think about this stuff. And the same with employment law – which side are you going to be on here? Unless you're at a very specific plaintiff side firm, you're not going to be defending the person who's being sexually harassed. You're on the other side of that case.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And you really don't get to make those kinds of decisions as a junior associate, that that's not the work you want to do. A lot of the bread and butter of BigLaw is things that are not appetizing to a lot of people, like asbestos work.

Alison Monahan: Or like insurance blowing up. I interviewed with someone who was like, "Oh yeah, I spend all my time", I think it was defending tire companies when their



tires blow up and kill people. And I just looked at him and he's like, "Yeah, if you don't want to do that, you probably shouldn't come here." And I was like, "Okay."

Sadie Jones: Exactly. I think that you should know that going into it, because I'm not putting a judgment call on like, that work needs to get done and that client's paying.

Alison Monahan: Right. Someone needs to do it.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and it does fund other things. You will get to do hopefully some good as well. But you need to know going into it that that's going to be something that's put on you, that you're not going to have control over. And so, just make sure you're comfortable with that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I just think being realistic about this, if you're making a lot of money defending people. I think for me, it came down to best, it was probably going to be sort of value-neutral. I did a lot of patent work, and frankly, it doesn't really matter which tech company wins these patent cases. We're not destroying the world necessarily if somebody's fighting over an Internet patent; it's just money. So, that was at least value-neutral. But it also meant every day, eventually I woke up and was like, "What am I doing with my life? This is a completely pointless."

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think a lot of people get to that point. So thinking about it ahead of time, like what will it be like to work with these clients? Because you'll know what their big clients are; you can look at that for any BigLaw firm. So just think into the future – how will you feel about it going forward?

Alison Monahan: And some people really are motivated by different things. For me, I wasn't particularly motivated by winning, but other people are. They just like to win. And so if that's you, this might be a great fit for you. You don't care who your client is, you just want to win. You want to win every motion, you want to win every decision, you want to win everything – that motivates you. I think those people often do pretty well at BigLaw firms.

Sadie Jones: I totally agree. And I think that there are people who kind of find the value in any work that they're doing: "Well, I'm helping this person" or, "I'm a part of keeping the economy going" and, "I'm developing valuable skills." And some people want to put it to you so it's something else in the future. And so, definitely certain people BigLaw fits really well. I just think most people end up not wanting to do it long-term.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Some people also are motivated by seeing their clients on the front page of the Wall Street Journal and being like, "I was involved in that case." Again, I don't care about that. It just isn't fundamentally something I care about, and



that's fine. But there are other people who are motivated by that, and good for them.

Sadie Jones: And if you're at BigLaw, all of these places get their names in the paper and usually are involved in big things that are going on. So, exactly – wherever you end up, you probably will be involved in some of that, if that's where you're going. And I agree, it's exciting to some people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I remember after I left, I had written a motion for some re-judgment on the way out the door, and a year later they heard the case or whatever, and somebody called me, who I used to work with, and they're like, "Oh my gosh. We're so excited. Your brief, you won. Your brief won, yay." And literally, my reaction was like, "Great, you don't have to go to trial." That was it. I did not have any other further emotional reaction. I think it was right when we'd started the Law School Toolbox, and I'd actually gotten an email that morning from a student who was like, "Oh my gosh, I just want to let you know after working with you guys, I got an A on my exam and I'm so excited." And I was legitimately excited about that email, and that was the point at which I knew I made the right choice.

Sadie Jones: And I think that's the best feeling in all of this, that you know where you're supposed to be. And it's like it might be one or the other, depending on who you are, but think about that. What motivates you? What makes you feel good?

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think that ties into our next point about what people end up often hating about BigLaw is, it sounds harsh to say, but really, it's the people.

Sadie Jones: I agree. I think that's the thing that kind of separates firms too.

Alison Monahan: True.

Sadie Jones: Because I think, in a way, BigLaw is all the same. And in a way, different places have a different culture and you kind of feel it going in and even interviewing, definitely working there. But generally, the people who are at BigLaw and do well and stay, are going to be really go-getters, perfectionists, type A. There's only one way to do things and it's the correct way. And you have to basically, as a junior person, adapt to all the different senior people you're working with, to the point that they require certain paper clips and they require things to be delivered in a certain way. And I'm not exaggerating.

Alison Monahan: You're not exaggerating. It just cracks me up.

Sadie Jones: And you get in so much trouble if you didn't know. People will tell you and you have to keep it all straight. And some people want to be emailed, some people only want to be called, some people you can only go through their secretary,



and you have to remember all of that. And that's the stuff that really can separate you from someone who does well or not. And so, you have to just go with it with those people, they're not going to adapt to you. And some people are not going to treat you with respect. I've seen lots of people cry, I've seen temper tantrums in adult people.

Alison Monahan: In the hallways. Literally, the stories of people yelling and throwing a stapler are actually true.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I hope that maybe it's a little bit better now.

Alison Monahan: Maybe, hopefully, I don't know.

Sadie Jones: That times have changed. But yeah, I think things are tolerated for some reason in this industry that are not tolerated in other industries.

Alison Monahan: Right, and that goes into a lot of things. I remember once I was at a conference for women lawyers and people were telling stories about sexual harassment, and then finally someone stood up and said, "Okay, there are a lot of recruiters in this room, there are a lot of partners, there are a lot of high-level people. Raise your hand if you think that a partner who did this would be fired at your firm." And almost no one did. And everyone was kind of like, "Alright, this is why we have a problem."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And so, I hope that that has changed a little bit. I have no idea, with recent things happening in the last few years.

Alison Monahan: Right. Hopefully.

Sadie Jones: At least I think some of it's been looked at maybe a little bit more, or people would be more willing to report people, because I think that's part of the problem. It's the culture of, "Stay quiet and don't tell anyone."

Alison Monahan: I know people who reported, and yeah, they got a settlement to leave, but they were still the ones who left.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: And that partner is still there.

Sadie Jones: The person who brings in the money is generally going to be the one who stays and gets away with it. I think on the other hand, there are great people. I think I've just found that most of the people that I would want to stay in touch with don't stay, because they're not willing to change the culture, they don't want to adapt to it.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think a lot of this just goes back to the business model. The business model is, someone has to bring in business, and if that person is bringing in business, they are very valuable financially to the firm. And even if they're behaving poorly, no one really wants to get rid of them, because people like to eat.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, and that's definitely the culture of law firms. And there are some where it's not as cut-throat, and I think some of it depends on the city you're in. I found a really big difference between East Coast and West Coast in my experience, not for everywhere. I know there are West Coast places, that you know of, that are difficult and harsh. But I think there's no question that the New York mentality is just really intense, in my experience.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I agree completely. And this may sound like we're being really harsh to firms, but I think you just have to understand the people who succeed in this work environment and end up being the people who are running the show, as we said, tend to have certain characteristics. They tend to be highly competitive, they tend to be really driven, they tend to be a little rigid, they tend to be workaholics. You don't get to be a partner because you're such a nice person who had a great work-life balance. That's just not how this happens.

Sadie Jones: Totally agree. And there are people like that, I feel like they tend to have different roles at the firm. Even if you look on who's on what committee, you'll see that the committees that are all involved in business development and clients and making the money are usually the tougher people, and they're the people that have more power and have more shares and things like that. And then the people that are not are usually involved in a little more touchy-feely areas. That's not where the money is, so they're just not going to have as much control over things.

Alison Monahan: Right. And I think you have to look at who is able to basically make someone a partner. You need somebody in the room who's willing to say, "I need this person to be a partner to continue doing my work", basically for you to become a partner. And if you're not able to build relationships with people who are willing to do that for you, or basically have to have you around, then you're probably not going to be able to stay. It's not like you just get to stay there for 20 years because you're doing good work. That's just not how this works, really. More and more, they do have... They have council positions and things like that, but if you want to be a partner and stay indefinitely, that's going to be very challenging.

Sadie Jones: And to me, the council positions are the better positions.

Alison Monahan: I agree.



- Sadie Jones: That's what I would choose. You are going to make less money, but you're still going to make really good money. And I actually think you have more job security, less pressure, it's much more like a job you go to, versus you have all the stress of running the business on you. So that's something to think about too – if you think you want to stay in BigLaw, which path fits you better?
- Alison Monahan: Right, because people also may not realize to become a partner at most firms you have to pay. And so, that can end up in tricky situations, where you're borrowing money to basically buy into this firm, and then things happen and the work slows down. It can get kind of ugly.
- Sadie Jones: And also, years ago, being a partner at a law firm meant you had job security forever, and you were just going to stay at that one law firm. That was sort of the business model. And it's just not like that anymore. Usually, partners move around, either by themselves or with a group, but I see very little people these days who are staying places forever. So, it's not like you have that feeling of, "Okay, this is the rest of my career."
- Alison Monahan: Right. And there's just not a lot of personal loyalty, I'm afraid, unfortunately, at this point.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: So we're not saying, "Don't do this." We're saying, "Be aware of the reality of what you're actually getting into, and in a modern way", because if you talk to someone who is retired partner, they're going to have a very different impression of what this was like, because when they started out, probably most people became partners if they stuck around and they had a cushy life and they keep their job and their office forever. And it was okay, but it's just a much more competitive environment now.
- Sadie Jones: And I think they'd also tell you they made a lot less money. There was a point in time where partners at law firms, their salaries shot up – I think late '80s, '90s. And so, the pressure and the responsibility completely changed, and the loyalty, like you said. I think just the amount of money that was going around was so much bigger. So I totally agree. It's just a different kind of environment. And we're giving you sort of worst case, which I think is also important to know, like here are the most difficult things that you may encounter. I don't know that every law firm is like this, and there may be places that are more self-reflective in recent years.
- Alison Monahan: Everyone's very nice and kind and lovely to deal with. Okay, that might exist. Let's move on though to the work environment, because I do think this comes



really straight out of the business model a lot. So, what are the things people don't love about the work environment and things like that?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think it can be kind of tedious and boring and you're putting in a lot of hours. And the other thing is, you have to work more hours than you're actually billing in order to get to your billable number. It's like if you need 10 hours a day, you're going to be working more than 10 hours a day. It's just going to be a lot of being told what to do, especially at the beginning, and just having to do it and maybe not enjoying what you're doing. And you need to be on call all the time – that's what they expect of you, that's why you need to be reachable. I remember a long, long time ago when we first got Blackberries and everyone was really excited, and I immediately knew it was a bad thing, because once you got a Blackberry, it was like, "Okay, now you need to answer it whenever we call."

Alison Monahan: Literally, any time. That for me was probably the hardest part, was just feeling like somebody else owned my time, and also having to track my time, which drove me completely insane. I'm just very bad about keeping track of what I'm doing at any given moment, and I have to do that in six-minute increments for my entire life, really just pushed me over the edge. But I think about even doctors, doctors are on call and then they're not on call, whereas your point, which I think is totally true, as an associate, you're always on call. Somebody could call you any time and tell you to cancel whatever you have going on and come to work, and that's just totally normal.

Sadie Jones: And, I don't know if this would be a popular opinion, but my opinion is that salaries have hit the point where that's actually fair. They are paying way too much with no experience to start at these law firms. I think that's where it happened when specifically first-year salaries got so high, and bonuses and things like that, that that's what you sign yourself away to. You have to earn that money. And you have to be realistic that you're not actually providing that much to them right at the beginning. What you can provide is you doing whatever they say, whenever they say it. And so, I think it's just important to think about where that comes from.

Alison Monahan: Right, and that might literally be like you're the person who has to figure out how to send a fax at 3:00 in the morning because nobody else wants to deal with it.

Sadie Jones: I remember I had a friend who was working on a deal that involved Europe, North America, and Asia.

Alison Monahan: Oh God.



- Sadie Jones: And he was the only junior person, and so he actually had to be available around the clock. He slept in two hour increments, and he just couldn't do it. I think he did it for a year, and that was the end of that. But it sounded insane, like it would affect your health.
- Alison Monahan: Of course.
- Sadie Jones: And no one thought this isn't fair.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Maybe there's another way we can cover some of these hours, so this one person doesn't have to cover 24 hours every day.
- Sadie Jones: Because I think things have become much more leanly staffed than they used to be. They expect you as the one junior person to pick up all the slack for all of this stuff, and you sort of have no recourse. You can't just be like, "I don't want to. I'm tired."
- Alison Monahan: That's the thing, that's literally what you signed up for. I had some partner once tell me not to go visit my grandmother on her deathbed because he needed me to do something stupid for him. In that case, I went anyway and told him he could fire me. But those things do happen.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely. And I hope that it's not that bad as the norm. I have worked with people who I think understand we're people. But that's when you should get a feel for, when you're hearing about what the firm is like, or stories. If I heard that story, I would think this isn't the place for me.
- Alison Monahan: Well, in that case, the night before in front of a bunch of other people, it was like, "Oh yeah, of course, family first. You need to do this." And then something happened over night and I woke up and there was a message that was like, "We need you to stay here." What do you do?
- Sadie Jones: Because I think that some of these things, in their eyes, they are life or death.
- Alison Monahan: Right, and it was not life or death.
- Sadie Jones: I always say nothing is life or death, unless you're working on a death penalty case.
- Alison Monahan: It was definitely not.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, nothing that a law firm is doing really fits into that category. But I do think the stakes when you get wrapped up in it, they do become the most important. If you have a trial or a deal's happening. Yeah.



- Alison Monahan: We were at trial, I get it. It would have been more convenient with this thing that happened for me to be there, but it was also like, "This is not really comparable."
- Sadie Jones: You can't control. Yeah, it's the rest... And so, that's something that I think people should keep in mind. If you're going to do this, don't get so wrapped up in it that you forget about your personal life and your life that's going to go on past the law firm, because that's the other thing I see happen. You get wrapped up in it, you start thinking that this is the most important thing. And for some people, maybe it is, and maybe they don't have a lot going on outside of this. But generally, I would just keep it in perspective. No matter what's happening, what everyone else is saying, just remember for yourself what this is. It's a job.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And I think this is how people really destroy their relationships too. A friend of mine had a semi-joke in law school, that he wanted to create a law firm misery index based on the number of partners that have been divorced every year. And he was going to basically make his choice on that. But you definitely see people destroying the rest of their lives.
- Sadie Jones: That is a problem in the whole legal profession, I will say.
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Sadie Jones: There are definitely people on the government side, public defenders and district attorneys that I think kind of run into the same thing. So, definitely think about that too, just making sure if you need any help or things are getting out of control, that you're seeking that, because I know that is a problem with the profession.
- Alison Monahan: Very true. It is definitely a challenge across the board. I remember when I was leaving my clerkship and I was talking to the judge about next steps, he gave me the advice he apparently gives all of his departing clerks who are going into BigLaw – he was like, "Don't take on a mortgage." And I was like, "What?" He's like, "Yeah, that's always my advice." He's like, "You get in this firm and you have all this money coming in, and then you're like, 'Oh, I should buy a house.'" He's like, "As soon as you do that, you are stuck. Do not get stuck. You need to be able to leave when you want to leave. There's nothing wrong with this. You might like it, you might be good at it. Go into it open-minded, just make sure that when it comes time that you decide you don't want to be there anymore, you are not financially in a position where you can't leave." And I think that's great advice.
- Sadie Jones: I totally agree. Or it's like, if you're going to get a mortgage, don't base it on the salary you make there; base it on what an average salary would be at another lawyer job you want, which is going to be a lot less. I would live like that,



because for most people who go into BigLaw, that's probably the most money they're ever going to make. Not for everybody, but for most people, the other jobs are going to pay lower. They're still going to mostly pay well and you can get by, but I would say just plan it out. If your plan is that you're only going to be there a few years and you're trying to pay off your student loans, budget for that, make sure you know. And then you're going to have a job making half that amount, like in-house or a government job. So, I would live on that amount of money and know that you can, because I think that this happens for everybody – you make more money and you spend more money, and you sort of get used to it, and then everything gets based on that. And then if it got way cut back, you can't even imagine how you would pay all your bills. So I totally agree, don't get stuck where you need to make that amount because the amount they make in BigLaw is not really realistic to the amount that most lawyers are making in all sorts of other jobs. But they choose to leave because they want a different lifestyle, or that's what I've seen most of the time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think if going to go into BigLaw, I think you just need to go in with your eyes open, realistic about what you're getting into, realize you're probably like everybody else – you probably will leave three to five years down the road, and that's totally fine. You take away the skills, you take away the money you've made, hopefully – some of it at least. But I do think you want to be realistic that, "Okay, this is probably not the job I'm going to have forever", and plan your life around that. Pay off the student loans, get yourself in a position where you actually can go and do something else if you want to do something else.

Sadie Jones: Because the opposite thing, if you end up staying, let's say, and you make partner and you hadn't planned for that – that's fine.

Alison Monahan: Great. Fantastic.

Sadie Jones: You can always adjust the other way, yeah. But I think not being tied into it is the key. And there are people I know who ended up being partner who told me they were not going to be partner, were not trying for it, weren't interested. There're the occasional people where it goes that direction, it's just extremely rare. So, remember that the majority of people are going to leave, either on their own or be asked to leave, not want to continue. I think it's always good to plan that way, and then if you end up becoming partner and making a lot of money, you can always change how you're doing things. But saving and being responsible about it is never a bad idea.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I found that the people that I look at that became partners from my class or whatever, various places, I'm like, "Huh, that's interesting." It's almost like not the people that were the total go-getters, you're like, "Oh, this person is totally going to be partner." They go off and do something else, and then disperse. It's just kind of like the closet gunner in law school and you're like,



"Oh, that person is the one who's a partner? Okay, that's interesting." So I think it's just very hard to predict.

Sadie Jones: A lot of them fly under the radar, I've noticed.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.

Sadie Jones: There are some people that were always going for it and they make it. They usually don't make it as quick as they expected to, I've noticed. But I've rarely been able to predict who is going to make partner, and so keep that in mind. And you can go for it, and it not work out. Just kind of have a backup plan. I'm not saying there aren't people where this makes sense for them and they won't be happy and it won't work out. I just think that the numbers tell us that that's not the case for most people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I just think you can't go in assuming you're going to be that 5% or whatever that ends up being partner 12 years later, it turns out now.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, at least.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, we're kind of over time on this one. Any final thoughts you want to share?

Sadie Jones: Yeah. My final thought is that I think that some people end up in BigLaw maybe for the same reason that some people end up in law school without thinking about it, which is just that it's the next thing, or it seems like the best thing to do, or kind of the ultimate. The same reason they pick the firm that's ranked the highest or the school that's ranked the highest without thinking about what's going to make them happy. My advice would just be to always ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? What are my goals? How do I think this is going to work for me?" And make sure you can answer that question with a real answer that makes sense. You don't need to do something just because everyone's talking about it, or that's what you hear about in law school. It definitely doesn't mean it's the only option. There are so many different things you can do as a lawyer with a law degree. That's really what I would say, is just make sure you know why you're doing it.

Alison Monahan: I think that's great advice. And also always have a backup plan. Alright, well, thank you so much joining us.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. With that, we are out of time. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, you can check out [CareerDicta.com](https://www.CareerDicta.com). If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a



second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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[Podcast Episode 159: The Secret Life of Law Firms \(w/Sadie Jones\)](#)

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